



R I S E

REACH ISOLATED  
SENIORS EVERYWHERE



# Warm Winter Wishes

REACH ISOLATED SENIORS EVERYWHERE



# Warm Winter Wishes

## RISE Sunday, February 19, 2017

When the cold weather strikes, many of us retreat to the warmth of our couch with a cup of hot chocolate. The thought of facing frigid temperatures, freezing rain, icy sidewalks and mounds of snow may limit our enthusiasm to get out and socialize. We spend less time outside (except when there is snow to be shovelled!) and see fewer people as we scurry from the car to the house. Difficult driving conditions or a cold, wet wait for the bus may limit our outings.

These conditions can be especially difficult for our elderly family, friends and neighbours and increase their risk of health problems, injuries, and loneliness. Social isolation is a health risk for seniors that often gets worse during the winter months.

### Here are a few simple ways to warm a winter day for a senior:

- *Make an effort to call and visit regularly with elderly family, friends and neighbours*
- *When weather makes visiting difficult, pick up the phone*
- *Video chat services can allow families to talk "face-to-face"*
- *Plan visits for times you may already be out and take advantage of good driving and walking days*
- *Help to set up transportation to the mall, senior centre or to visit family and friends*
- *Bring video of the grandchildren's figure skating routine or hockey game or set them up to see it live online*
- *When weather makes it difficult for the senior to get out help them to plan lunches, visits and parties at their home - it's a great way to stay connected and independent*
- *When weather permits, help them bundle up, go out to watch the kids play street hockey, build a snowman or make snow angels - even just five or ten minutes of fresh air and sunshine can lift one's spirit*
- *Plan an indoor activity like researching your family ancestry, organizing photographs or recipes*
- *On appointment and errand days try to add in a fun stop for lunch, a coffee or a movie*
- *During severe weather, ask if they need transportation to medical appointments or to run errands*
- *Clear and salt a path, offer to pick up mail, milk or a coffee*





# Winter Safety Tips

By having a plan and taking a proactive approach to the challenges winter may bring can help a senior to stay active and social this winter. Here are a few tips to help have a healthy and safe winter:

## Stay in Touch

- A battery-powered portable radio can provide information and updates when the power goes out and a cell phone will help you stay connected and call for help

## Stay Active

- Exercise improves energy levels, keeps the mind and body strong and helps to prevent injuries - get up, move and stretch every hour
- Look for telephone or computer based social programs
- With fewer opportunities to socialize it is important to keep your mind stimulated — daily activities like reading, crosswords or balancing your finances will help

## Be Prepared

- Create a list of phone numbers for emergency and non-emergency calls
- Set up for home delivery/visits for prescriptions, groceries, lab work and hair appointments
- Stock up on necessities like toilet paper, canned food and emergency supplies
- Have plenty of warm blankets, working flashlights and batteries on hand
- Schedule a maintenance service call for the furnace
- Inspect heating devices, keep clothing, curtains and blankets away from them (never use kerosene heaters or stoves to heat your home)
- Install and/or inspect smoke and carbon monoxide detectors near bedrooms and on all floors
- In a weather emergency have someone stay with you or stay with a friend or family member

## Talk with the doctor

- About diet and supplements which may be needed during the winter months
- Flu season and the flu shot
- Conditions and medications which may increase susceptibility to the cold
- Mobility challenges and risk of falls due to icy conditions
- Review your prescriptions and ensure refills are up to date

## Falls

It is easy to slip and fall in the winter, especially in icy and snowy conditions.

- Ensure snow is cleared and paths are salted regularly
- Carry a small (zip lock) bag of salt with you
- Wear boots with non-skid soles and if you use a cane change to an ice pick-like attachment for added traction

## Hypothermia

Seniors are more vulnerable to hypothermia due to chronic health issues, medication, limited mobility, poor nutrition, inadequate heating in the home and windy, wet weather conditions.

## What to be aware of and to look for:

Is the house cold?

Is the person dressed for cold weather?

Physical signs may include, but are not limited to changes in balance and movement, cold hands and feet, shivering, sleepiness, confusion and slurred speech.

***Seek medical attention immediately if you think you or someone you know are experiencing symptoms of hypothermia.***

## Limit the risk:

- Set and keep heat at 20°C/68°F or higher
- Day and night wear extra layers and keep blankets close to cover legs and shoulders
- Close vents and shut the doors in rooms you are not using and check for drafts (both may help with the cost of heating!)
- Check the weather forecast for temperature, wind chill factor and precipitation
- Stay warm and dry by wearing layers, a hat, scarf, mittens, waterproof clothing and boots
- Don't stay outdoors too long and if your clothing and boots get wet, go inside as soon as possible

***The above tips are for information purposes only. Talk to your doctor or healthcare professional about possible concerns, questions and risk factors including lifestyle, medication, exercise and diet.***

# A simple act of kindness and caring warms a winter's day for a senior

The goal of the RISE Campaign is to help Canadians become aware of the possible impact of social isolation and loneliness on their older family members, friends and neighbours – and to take action.



Another leaflet in this series, called **The Spectrum**, describes the risk factors and possible actions to address social isolation. It can be downloaded for free on the RISE website:



[www.rise-cisa.ca](http://www.rise-cisa.ca)  
[info@rise-cisa.ca](mailto:info@rise-cisa.ca)  
1-800-648-1111

*We welcome new participating organizations and sponsors.*

Participating organization :



[www.helpagecanada.ca](http://www.helpagecanada.ca)